

**AMENDMENTS TO THE CLAIMS:**

This listing of claims will replace all prior versions, and listings, of claims in this application.

Please amend the claims to read as set forth below.

1. (Currently Amended) Root canal instrument (1), which includes a metallic needle part (3) for working the tooth and a gripping end (2) attached to the upper end of the needle part to serve as a handle, ~~characterized in that~~ wherein the outer surface of the gripping end (2) is substantially continuous, that the coefficient of friction of at least the material used in the outer surface of the gripping end is higher than the coefficient of friction of the material typically used in gripping ends of root canal instruments made of metal, polyphenylene sulfide or a similar material, and that the hardness of at least the material used in the outer surface of the gripping end as well as the thickness of this material layer are so chosen that the shape of the gripping end (2) is recoverably deformable between fingers.
2. (Currently Amended) Root canal instrument according to claim 1, ~~characterized in that~~ wherein the coefficient of friction of the material of the outer surface of the gripping end (2) is higher, preferably substantially higher than 0.4, determined as a coefficient of kinetic friction and with steel as a material pair.
3. (Currently Amended) Root canal instrument according to claim 2, ~~characterized in that~~ wherein the aforesaid coefficient of friction of the material of the outer surface of the gripping end (2) is within the range of about 0.5...0.8, preferably 0.7...0.8.
4. (Currently Amended) Root canal instrument according to claim 1, ~~2 or 3, characterized in that~~ wherein the gripping end (2) is made of a substantially homogeneous material.
5. (Currently Amended) Root canal instrument according to ~~any one of claims 1-4, characterized in that~~ claim 1, wherein the gripping end (2), or at least its surface layer, is made of an elastomer having a hardness substantially in the range of 10...95 Shore A, preferably in the range of 30...95, suitably in the range of 50...85 and most suitably about 60...70 Shore A.

6. (Currently Amended) Root canal instrument according to ~~any one of claims 1-5, characterized in that~~ claim 1, wherein the gripping end (2) has a surface layer (9), under which there is at least one layer of some other material.

7. (Currently Amended) Root canal instrument according to claim 6, ~~characterized in that~~ wherein the said surface layer (9) is substantially thin, in which case it has a somewhat lower hardness, preferably about 5...10 units Shore A lower than the hardness of the said gripping end (2) made of a homogeneous material.